



**RICHARD FRANK STIKA**  
**BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE**  
**THIRD BISHOP OF KNOXVILLE**

**D E C R E E**

Whereas, the Diocese of Knoxville has been monitoring the directives, recommendations and guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Tennessee State and Local Health Departments to ensure that all diocesan parishes are responding appropriately to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19); and

Whereas, as responsible human beings living in society with our fellow man we have a duty towards the common good and the proportionate care and caution necessary to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 disease; and

Whereas, access to the sacraments and the salvation of souls (the supreme law of the Church) is of high importance for the spiritual good and the overall well-being of the faithful:

Through this decree, effective the weekend of May 30 - May 31, 2020, the Solemnity of Pentecost, I hereby mandate the following directives (procedures) regarding the reception of sacraments and celebration of funerals {Note - our pastors may contact my office and seek my permission to slightly amend these directives/procedures based upon their parish's unique, site-specific challenges}:

**1. Baptism**

- A. All the procedures with regard to the use of face masks, 6-foot distancing, the 50% seating capacity limitation and the reception of Holy Communion as outlined in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020 are to be enforced.
- B. Prior to the baptismal celebration, set up a baptismal table with the following items stationed on the table: sanitized glass/metal/plastic water pitcher filled with bottled, purified water; clean large bowl (basin to collect the baptismal water); cotton balls (swabs); oil of the catechumens; holy chrism oil; two towels and the **Order of Baptism** book.
- C. Prior to the baptismal celebration, after you have sanitized your hands, provide a parent with a towel and the Godfather with a baptismal candle for him to hold during the baptismal celebration (thus negating the need of the priest/deacon to disinfect their hands during the celebration and cause a disruption. (Note: the family may bring their own candle and the priest/deacon can use a taper if there are height impediments).
- D. With face mask on, follow the **Rite of Baptism**. In lieu of the priest/deacon making the sign of the cross directly on the child's head, make the sign of the cross from a 6-foot distance. (Note: parents and godparents can make the sign of the cross directly on the head of the child). Using a cotton ball (swab), perform the exorcism and anointing with the oil of the



catechumens maintaining a safe distance. Perform the blessing over the baptismal water which is in the sanitized glass/metal/plastic water pitcher and then facilitate the renunciation of sin and profession of faith. Perform the baptism by pouring the blessed holy water over the crown of the head of the child being baptized. Using a cotton ball (swab), perform the anointing on the crown of the head with the holy chrism oil. Following the reception of the baptismal garment and the candle lighting proceed to the ephphetha but **DO NOT** physically touch the person's ears or mouth.

## 2. Confirmation

A. All the procedures with regard to the use of face masks, 6-foot distancing, the 50% seating capacity limitation and the reception of Holy Communion as outlined in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020 are to be enforced.

B. After the presentation of the candidates, homily and renewal of baptismal promises, the bishop and/or delegated priest will perform the laying of the hands by extending their hands over the *confirmandi* maintaining the minimum 6-foot distancing.

C. With face mask on - perform the anointing with holy chrism oil by maintaining as safe a distance as possible and by using a cotton ball (swab) to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the one to be confirmed. Note: "N, be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."; The newly confirmed responds: "Amen."; The Bishop (or delegated priest) says: "Peace be with you."; **OMIT the physical shaking of hands**; The newly confirmed replies: "And with your spirit."

## 3. Reconciliation

A. Individual confessions may be celebrated in a well-ventilated area which can provide for social distancing and the confidentiality of the confession.

B. The sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated inside the church or spaces of church or parish school buildings which have been prepared for the worthy celebration of the sacrament. The area where the penitents wait for their turn for confession should be arranged to ensure the minimum distance between each penitent is at least 6 feet.

C. As you are able, provide for the anonymity of the penitent if that is possible and desired as an option.

D. Spaces for confession should minimize the likelihood of multiple people touching surfaces which the next penitent might contact.

E. Both the priest and the penitent **MUST** wear a protective face covering (face mask) during the waiting period and actual confession.

F. Each pastor shall publicize the days/times confessions will be heard.

## 4. RCIA (Initiation Sacraments)

A. All the procedures with regard to the use of face masks, 6-foot distancing, the 50% seating capacity limitation and the reception of Holy Communion as outlined in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020 are to be enforced.

B. Since there were no initiation sacraments at the Easter Vigil this year in the Diocese of Knoxville, the bishop grants permission to priests to celebrate the initiation of the elect by Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist on Pentecost on May 30-31, 2020.

C. Likewise, in accordance with Church law, priests may celebrate the Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church at any time for those



adults and children of catechetical age who have a valid baptism in another Christian denomination.

D. Where there are both Elect (unbaptized) and Candidates (baptized) the Rite formally known as The (Combined) Celebration at the Easter Vigil of the Sacraments of Initiation and of the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church will be used.

E. The pastor must comply with the directives for baptism and confirmation provided above (**1. Baptism A-D**) and (**2. Confirmation A-C**) respectively and the directives for the reception of Holy Communion found in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020.

5. **Weddings**

A. All the procedures with regard to the use of face masks, 6-foot distancing, the 50% seating capacity limitation and the reception of Holy Communion as outlined in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020 are to be enforced. The bridal party and groomsmen must be separated by 6 feet and all must wear face masks.

B. The bride and groom may be seated in or near the sanctuary (depending on size of sanctuary space) and once positioned – they may remove their face mask.

C. The presiding priest/deacon should remain a minimum of 6-feet from the bride and groom at all times.

D. Prior to the celebration, the rings should be pre-placed on a tray and placed on a table within the sanctuary.

E. Follow the **Rite of Marriage**.

6. **Funerals**

A. All the procedures with regard to the use of face masks, 6-foot distancing, the 50% seating capacity limitation and the reception of Holy Communion as outlined in the Decree – **Public Mass Directives**, dated May 6, 2020 are to be enforced.

B. Funeral rites may be celebrated according to the **Order of Christian Funerals**.

Given at the Chancery this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May in the Year of Our Lord 2020.



*Richard F. Stika*

Most Reverend Richard F. Stika  
Bishop of Knoxville

*Sean K. Smith*

Deacon Sean K. Smith  
Chancellor